

RUSTY LUCAS
P.O. Box 422
SANDUSKY, OHIO 44871

June 16, 2006

Mark Mariani
c/o Mariani Packing Co., Inc.
500 Crocker Drive
Vacaville, CA 95688-8706
ATTN: Mariani Premium Cherries

Dear Mr. Mariani,

I recently read with great interest the quote from your bag of Dried Cherries attributed to George Washington. (From your bag): *"Here's a bit of trivia. What did our Founding Father, George Washington, say after he chopped down the cherry tree? He said, 'Let's dry these gorgeous cherries and snack on them later.' All right, he didn't really say that. But if he were alive today, he would most definitely be snacking on Mariani Dried Cherries. It's that hint of tanginess blended with the natural sweetness of the cherries that'll keep you coming back for more!"*

As a direct descendant of George Washington's older brother, I take great pride and interest in the father of our country -- who I like to refer to as Uncle George. So it is with a little consternation that I must inform you that your printed facts are incorrect. Contrary to popular opinion, Uncle George never chopped down a cherry tree. It was actually a fig tree.

Someplace I have a photocopy of a page taken from a journal prepared by Uncle George's great nephew (my great-great-great grandfather) that clears up that modern misunderstanding. I bet the folks who make Fig Newtons would really like to see that revelation come to light, wouldn't you think? But it has been such deep rooted American folklore for so long that Uncle George and the mythical cherry tree will always be associated together -- not unlike the way Jack will always be identified by the beanstalk or how Tom Cruise will forever be associated with Scientology.

It is to the point now where people would cry blasphemy if anyone tried to debunk the chopped cherry tree story. It amazes me how tightly people will hold onto a fictional story that makes them feel good about themselves, even when it is untrue. I don't want to tear apart the fibers of an American legend and be forever known as the cherry spoiler -- not unlike the guy who tells young children that the tooth fairy doesn't exist. So I will keep my journal pages tucked away.

Anyway, I was recently enjoying a bag of your dried cherries. As I was chewing up dried cherries (moistened with my saliva), I bit down onto something hard and not chewy at all. I spit it out into my hand.

On the back of your bag it says: **"-CAUTION- dried cherries may occasionally contain pits or pit fragments due to machine pitting."** While I considered the above warning accordingly, this definitely was not a pit or pit fragment, but rather was a stem or stem fragment. I took a photograph of it using my new cell phone camera and I am enclosing a copy of that picture with my letter for you to examine.

Please do not be afraid that I am going to try to sue you or anything stupid like that. Still, I need you to know that this is an honest complaint and not a 'plant' like that woman who "found" a finger in her bowl of chili from Wendy's. How does this happen and how can it be corrected? I don't want to see Uncle George associated with an inferior product, and I have never bitten into a fig stem while eating a tray of Fig Newtons.

If you need the bag identification information to confer with your QA department, this particular bag had the following information printed on the back: "Best if used by: 02/2007 6 047 12:38" And on the bottom next to the bar code it says: "MAR 508700-2" (These are the only identifying markings I can discern other than the standard printing and packaging.)

Please let me know if I can offer any other information to help identify the source of this wayward cherry stem.

Sincerely,



Rusty Lucas

p.s. Do you have any Mariani company baseball caps? If so, please send me one. I will put it with all of my other George Washington memorabilia. I don't have much of a collection just yet, but I am starting to put together a list of all things that George is associated with. So far I have an American dollar bill, an American quarter, and an American postage stamp. I have photocopies from Uncle George's great nephew's journal and I am also working on getting a hot toddy cup that Uncle George once drank from. Since Mariani cherries (and not Fig Newtons) would be Uncle George's favorite snack if he were alive today, I think a Mariani baseball cap would be an appropriate addition to that collection. Don't you?

